

Albanian Political Parties in Exile

A. In the "Free Albania Committee" the following parties in exile are represented:

1. Balli Kombetar (National Front)
2. Albania Agrarian Party
3. Legaliteti (Monarchist Party).

B. Other parties in exile, but not belonging to the above committee are: the ***Bloku Kombetar Independent (The Independent National Bloc)***; and the Prizren League. These latter groups are politically the extreme right and philo-Italian, in accordance with the conception that history and geography tie Albania and Italy and that without Italy, Albania becomes a paralytic ethnic unit.

C. Chief exponents of the Independent National Bloc are:

(1) **Dr. Ismail Verlaci**, son of Shqeuqet Verlaci, Prime Minister during the Italian Occupation of Albania, presently residing in Rome. Ismail Verlaci is undoubtedly pro-Italian, and he advocates the formation of an anti-Communist front, regardless of the form of government, Republican or Monarchist. He has considerable authority and finds many followers, particularly among the younger elements with whom he is in constant contact. Consequently, he is much feared by the present regime in Albania, as well as by the prospective candidates of a future democratic government. The policy adapted by Verlaci to justify his pro-Italian sympathies is in substance as follows: *"One must seek support from Italy because the Italians are the least interested in the de-nationalization of our people and the partition of our territory; the Italians have only economic interests in our country and it is to their vital interest to advocate a united Albania."* For those principles, Ismail Verlaci has been made the object of attacks from the Communists. Verlaci has been and is still in touch with the former prefect of police in Tirana, Papatillo, an able politician, about sixty years old.

(2) **Marka Gjoni, GJONI**, spiritual head of the resistance movement in Mirditia (Northern Albania) and Prince of that zone, Gjoni advocates the formation of an united anti-Communist front, and several times he has contacted Ali Bey Klisura, the most prominent exponent of Balli Kombetar, in an effort to achieve this. According to Gjoni, the Monarchist issue should be dealt with by means of a public referendum after the Communists have been driven from power. However, no positive results were received in these problems due to the uncompromising attitude of the Balli Kombetar, which refused to give up its republican principles, alleging

that this would mean a weakening of the "national front" and place Klisura in the background. Klisura is at present allied with the British, while Gjoni is **entirely devoted to the national cause of Albania** and does not approve of British interference in Albanian affairs. ***Gjoni is considered by many to be the most suitable personality to bring about the overthrow of the Communists in Albania, both as a patriot and a practical man.*** Several members of his family were killed during an uprising in Albania. In regard to the Greek territorial claims on Albania (which are supported by some powers), Gjoni maintains an absolutely uncompromising attitude in not admitting any territorial concessions of any nature.

(3) **Professor Ernest Koliqi**, during the Italian Occupation was Minister of Public Education, President of the Chamber of Deputies, and currently is professor of Albanian Literature at the University of Rome. Koliqi is the most educated and perhaps the most intelligent in the Albanian community in Rome. Politically, he is anti-Communist and pro-Italian; he has no preference between a monarchy and a republic; advocates only a free and independent Albania. In this he is upheld by the Italian Foreign Office, which seems to give considerable moral support to the cause of an independent Albania (without, however, any precise viewpoint on the question of Albanian frontiers). Because of his world-wide fame as a scholar, Koliqi has much influence, both in Rome and abroad.

D. The best known exponent of the Prizren League is Xafer Deve, who was Minister of the Interior during the German Occupation. Deve is a violent character, urging military action against the Communists; it is rumored that he is presently organizing some guerilla "legions" of Albanians and Macedonians. It is the general opinion that this is only a bluff, for he has little authority and cannot rely upon resolute individuals due to the vigilance of the Albanian Army along the Greek border, and also the activity of the Roje Popullore (Communist Popular Militia), which has many informants among the Albanian refugees. It is known that Deve has made proposals to the British and Americans for obtaining a supply of arms. Deve who is now an Egyptian citizen, is not on good terms with Klisura and the groups of Verlaci and Koliqi.

E. Objectively speaking, these Albanians parties were all created by political interests which seek control and hegemony over the Balkans. Thus, the nations taking active interest in the welfare of the various parties are as follows:

- (1) Legaliteti (Monarchists): England
- (2) Balli Kombetar (National Front): England
- (3) Albanian Agrarian Party: Yugoslavia
- (4) **Independent National Bloc: Italy** (and indirectly the US)
- (5) The Prizren League: Italy

The structure of the above parties varies as do the foreign interests in the Balkans, and it follows that instead of any collaboration among the parties, there is only suspicion, intrigue and rivalry.

F. The National Front (Balli Kombetar) managed to gain the upper hand in the "Committee for a Free Albania" when this committee was formed in Paris in August 1949, after a quasi formal consultation among the various party representatives responsible for the policy of the committee. As the dominant party, the National Front has been mostly responsible for the policy of the committee. Within the ranks of this party it was believed that Colonel Fitzroy MacClean had reached some accord with Tito in regard to Albania. A few considerations bore out this belief. For example: Tito had given some signs of a plan, the principal aim of which was to bring pressure to bear on Enver Hoxha's Cominformist government – probably by stirring up some activity on Albania's northern border. Actually Tito delegated this task of harassing the Albanian government to Serbophile Gani Kreyzieu, head of the Albanians in Kosovo and brother of Said Kryeziu, leader of the Albanian Agrarian Party. (The Kosovo, ethnically Albanian, was assigned to Yugoslavia by the London Conference of 30 May 1913). This MacClean accord and Kosovo plan were later substantiated sufficiently so that the National Front modified its policy within the "Committee" and in Albanian circles. Fearing possible developments of the Tito-MacClean accord, and fearing further isolation from the Prizren League, the National Front toned down its policy of domination and hesitated in making any clear decisions and in taking any definite action. This has naturally hampered the activities of the Committee.

G. Meanwhile, National Front exponents also fear that the British may bring pressure to bear on Albania through Greece, who claims a part of southern Albania (Korce and Gjirokastra). Tito has had his own troubles and has not been able to do anything on the northern border – not even through the Albanian exiles. Thus, the Albanian government, fearing the threat from the south, has concentrated two divisions along the Greek border. In the meantime, the Soviet Union, seeing Albania thus isolated and encircled, foments disorders, in Macedonia, promising and intending to set up an independent Macedonian state.

H. In the National Front circles, it is known that roads are being built in Albania with the purpose of joining Elbasan with the Greek-Yugoslav border in the vicinity of Lake Ohrid. This might be the result of a plan made by the Soviets to join Bulgaria and Albania through a corridor in Macedonia. Although this appears to be very difficult it would solve the problem of border, and the by the Soviet Union if it were to succeed . From circles it is believed that in order to defeat this threst, the Greeks urged on by the Allies might break through the southeast border of the Albania and march on Vlone, thus cutting the route of the Communists. (It will be remember that a state of war still exists between Albania and Greece, since no peace treaty has as yet been signed.)

I. According to these same circles, the National Front is attempting to infiltrate Albanians into the fatherland through Greece in order to spread propaganda within the ranks of the Albanian army in favor of a free Albania. Other Albanian Parties, rivals of the Balli Kombetar, have not shown any enthusiasm for this venture. These latter parties believe that the hypothetical corridor of the Soviets in Macedonia is nothing but political pressure and an attempt to embarrass Tito. The same National Front sources reveal that some members of the National Front (about 25 persons) are presently in Malta waiting to be sent to Albania. Although this type of expedition should first of all result in information of a military, political and economic nature, the members of this expedition will probably spread propaganda in favor of their own party, and nothing more. This is another example of the fact that an effective collaboration among the parties is impossible.

J. Members of the Balli Kombetar believe that a policy of patience should prevail, since the USSR is daily seen to be in more difficulty in furnishing supplies to Albania. From information gathered in Albania, these members have learned that morale in the Albanian army is extremely low, and that of the civilian population even lower. The economic situation of the country is bad, inasmuch as the USSR, in exchange for raw materials, sends an infrequent shipment of cereals and arms.

K. The National Front, in Committee circles, shows itself willing to collaborate with the Monarchists, only for opportunistic reasons and in order not to be isolated. Ex King Zogu is perfectly aware of the intentions of the National Front and does not fear them. Zogu is represented on the Committee by his trusted servant, Abaz Kupi, who recently left Rome to join the King in Egypt in order to discuss possible developments of the Albanian situation.

L. The National front members believe in eventual victory of their own party in the Free Albania movement, because of their social and revolutionary ideology. They believe that King Zogu is an English pawn, to be used in case of failure of the Republicans (The National Front). Such a failure they exclude on the grounds that the Yugoslavs could not suffer the restoration of the monarchy in Albania because the ideological differences would be dangerous to the countries of popular democracy. And when the time comes for the founding of a new Albanian government, the National Front leaders hope for foreign support (English and Yugoslav).

M. The most prominent exponent of Balli Kombetar is Ali Bey Klisura, now in exile in Rome. During the constitution of Albania, Klisura was the closest collaborator of Nurredin Bey Vlora, and with him held a position of command within the provisional government of Vlone. Later however, he tried to undermine the prestige of Vlora, turning first to Italy and then to Germany. With the assistance of Germany, Klisura managed to set up the

cadres of Balli Kombetar at the very beginning of World War II, organizing a small army (which assumed a definite anti-Italian attitude). In January 1943, Klisura and other members of the Balli Kombetar were captured by General Hoxha's Communist Partisans. These partisans were organized with the assistance of the British (Major Seymour). However, Britain was at that time still uncertain about the policy to adopt with the two Albanian factions; therefore, Klisura was set free. After the war he went into exile, and is now the most influential representative of Balli Kombetar.